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SUBJECT: INSTRUCTIONS: BELARUS POLITICAL PRISONER  
KOZULIN'S HUNGER STRIKE

¶1. (SBU) Action Request: USUN is instructed to raise the issue of the hunger strike of Belarus political prisoner Kozulin under "other matters" during the Security Council's informal consultations on Monday, December 11, and to make a statement to the press following the consultations, drawing on the points in para 3 below. End Action Request.

¶2. (U) Background: Former Presidential candidate and political prisoner Alexander Kozulin has now passed the 50-day mark in his hunger strike to protest the rule of President Lukashenko and the human rights situation in Belarus. He has said repeatedly that the only way he will stop his hunger strike is if the U.S. or one of the G-8 countries announced its intention to bring up the issue in the UN Security Council. We understand that Kozulin is now close to death. Since he began his hunger strike, the UNGA Third Committee adopted a resolution condemning the human rights situation in Belarus. President Bush made a strong statement at the NATO meeting in Riga condemning the Belarus regime and calling for it to release all political prisoners. Embassy Minsk has issued many public statements putting the onus on the Belarus government, not the West, for Kozulin's fate. On December 7, the Belarus Democracy Reauthorization Act of 2006 passed in the U.S. House of Representatives, sponsored by Representatives Lantos and Smith.

¶3. (U) Begin points.

-- Today, the United States would like to call the Council's attention to the tragic situation of Alexander Kozulin, a former Presidential candidate and now political prisoner in Belarus, who began a hunger strike over 50 days ago in protest of the regime of President Lukashenko and the human rights situation in Belarus. We understand that his health now is now extremely precarious.

-- It is tragic that the oppression of the Belarus government has forced Belarusians to take such drastic measures to express their views.

-- The Lukashenko regime's politically-motivated sentencing and treatment of Kozulin continues a disturbing pattern by the authorities to intimidate civil society activists and to further erode the democratic process in Belarus.

-- President Bush, speaking in Riga, Latvia, on November 28, described Belarus as "a place where peaceful protesters are beaten and opposition leaders are 'disappeared' by the agents of a cruel regime. The existence of such oppression in our midst offends the conscience of Europe, and it offends the conscience of America. We have a message for the people of Belarus: The vision of a Europe whole, free, and at peace includes you -- and we stand with you in your struggle for freedom."

-- The United States of America calls upon the Belarusian

authorities to free all persons being held on politically motivated charges.

End points.

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